

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000498

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP  
CAIRO FOR STEVE BONDY  
LONDON FOR ETHAN GOLDRICH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2029

TAGS: PINS ASEC PREL BA

SUBJECT: BAHRAINI SHIA INITIALLY COOL ON MUQTADA AL-SADR

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Robert S. Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Even if Coalition operations to arrest Muqtada Al-Sadr result in his death, Bahraini Shia are unlikely to react violently. On April 7 POL Section polled a wide spectrum of Shia contacts regarding the spike in violence in Iraq. The majority of our Shia contacts doubted that the apprehension of Al-Sadr would have an impact on Bahraini Shia. Former exile and Al-Wifaq member Nizar Al Qari told PolOff on April 7 that Bahraini Shi'a look for guidance from religious leaders like Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Al-Sistani and Lebanon's Fadlallah. Al-Sadr is from an entirely different school of thought and often in disagreement with Al-Sistani. It is unlikely that either Al-Sistani or Fadhlallah would call Shia in the region to revenge Al-Sadr's death, he said.

¶2. (C) In addition, Al Qari mentioned to PolOff on April 7 that Shaikh Ali Salman President of the largest Shia political society Al Wifaq, traveled to Najaf to visit with Ayatollah Al-Sistani and to stay with his close friend, IGC member and member of the Islamic Da'wa party Ibrahim Al-Ja'fari. Upon his return Shaikh Ali Salman informed his members that the Shi'a would not interfere with developments in Iraq.

¶3. (C) Some Shi'a contacts consider Al-Sadr too young to deserve a Bahraini reaction. Youth Forum member Jaafer Hamza told PolFSN on April 7 that Al-Sadr is a stupid political teenager. Hamza was not surprised that Al-Sadr ordered Al-Khui's murder and those who understand Iraq know that "Al-Sadr is digging his own grave." Most other Shia contacts, however, suspect that the evidence against Al-Sadr in the murder of Al-Khui is a USG fabrication in its ploy to occupy Iraq beyond June 30.

¶4. (C) Comment: It would help our own work trying to keep Bahrain's Shia majority on board with our policies in Iraq if some details of the investigation into Sadr's involvement in Ayatollah al-Khui's death could be released. Information about the arrest warrant and accusations won't help us much. We could better use background details about how the information which led to the arrest warrant was developed.

FORD